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ABSTRACT

This book portrays two personal journeys--the author's and that of the Sahtuot'ine of Great Bear Lake in the Northwest Territories (Canada). The author's journey began when, as a young teacher in 1965, she accepted a teaching position in the small isolated community of Fort Franklin in the Northwest Territories. The first part of the book describes her life and teaching in this community of 250 Sahtuot'ine Indians, 400 dogs, 9 whites, and no radio, television, telephones, or newspapers. It was a time of transition for the Sahtuot'ine (a Dene people) as they went from being nomadic hunters and trappers to living a more sedentary life in the small community where their children attended school. A brief history of the Sahtuot'ine provides a perspective for the story of the author's 3 years in Fort Franklin. The second part of the book documents her return trip to the village, now called by its traditional name of Deline, in 1995. Her account of the devastating changes that had occurred in the 1970s and 1980s when outside culture trampled the village are mixed with observations on the strength and resiliency of the people. In the intervening years, the Native people of the Canadian north had negotiated with the Canadian government for recognition of their ancestral rights and rights for self-government, including teaching Native language and culture in the schools. Although the book focuses on one community, it sheds light on the concerns, struggles, and successes of First Nations people across Canada. (Contains notes, photographs, and an index.) (TD)

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